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Scenery Report

Little Deer Project

Goosenest Ranger District, Klamath National Forest
Siskiyou County, California

For Information Contact: Bob Talley
Northern California Resource Center
P. O. Box 342
Fort Jones, CA 96032
(530) 468-2888
lalexander@sisqtel.net

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Overview of Methodology

A scenery assessment of project activities was conducted using field and office review, professional expertise, and on-the-ground knowledge. Seven potentially affected sensitivity viewpoints were identified with visibility of the project area including: Highway 97, Grass Lake Rest Area, Forest Road 70, County Road 6P01 (Tennant Road), Goosenest Mountain, and Herd Peak and Orr Mountain Lookouts.

This analysis applies current National Forest Landscape Management methodology in conjunction with existing Forest Plan direction. It is based on previous field studies of similar types of projects, field observations from sensitive viewpoints, and consideration of public preferences for scenic quality. More detailed information is provided in the body of the Scenery resource report, available on the project website.

Analysis Indicators

Analysis indicators used to determine the effects of alternatives on scenery include:

Scenic Character:

The overall visual impression or image that gives a geographical area its identity. Scenic character is a qualitative description of the the combination of vegetative patterns, landforms, water characteristics, and cultural features. The existing scenic character description provides a basis for comparing changes from alternatives.

Scenic Integrity represented by Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs)

Levels of acceptable visual change identified in the Forest Plan. Integrity may meet or exceed Forest Plan VQOs.

Spatial and Temporal Context

The spatial scale for analysis of effects to scenic character (analysis area) includes the viewsheds within and outside the project area from the sensitive viewing locations identified in the Forest Plan as displayed in table 3-19. For scenic integrity (VQOs), the spatial analysis area is the project area within which management takes place. The temporal scale is defined as up to three years for scenic integrity short-term effects (Retention and Partial Retention VQOs must be met within three years; maximum modification VQO must be met immediately Forest Plan, page 4-35). Short-term effects to scenic character are defined as five years (the time required for dead trees to fall); long-term effects to scenery are up to 80-100 years (time for conifer regeneration to reach maturity; see the Vegetation section of chapter 3 of this document and the Vegetation resource report).

Table S- 1: Identified potential viewsheds, sensitivity level, and distance zone

Potential Viewpoint(s)	Visual Sensitivity Level	Distance Zone
State Highway 97 (Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway)	High	Foreground
Grass Lake Rest Area	High	Middle ground
Herd Peak Lookout*	High	Background
Forest Road 70	Moderate	Foreground
County Road #6P01 (Tennant Road)	Moderate	Foreground
Goosenest Mountain*	Moderate	Background
Orr Mountain Lookout*	Moderate	Background

Visual Sensitivity Level: **High** = high level of interest in scenery; **Moderate** = secondary County or Forest road, recreation site or area, moderate use

***** = Viewpoints identified as a sensitive viewpoint post-Forest Plan and as such were not used in the development of Forest Plan VQOs. Post-Forest Plan viewpoints are not required to meet standard 11-1, but can be considered during project planning.

SOURCE: USDA, Forest Service, Klamath National Forest. 2009. Scenery Sensitivity Levels Map, Klamath National Forest – Eastside (on file at the Klamath National Forest Headquarters, Yreka, CA).

Affected Environment

Scenic Character

The overall scenic character consists of volcanic peaks protruding from broad, gently sloping landforms; previous to the Little Deer fire these were overlain with largely continuous ponderosa pine forest canopies. Attractive openings include small meadows, sagebrush flats, and distinctive irregular lava flow patches on or near the volcanic peaks. The volcanic landforms, lava flow patterns, and consistently high atmospheric clarity are all major attributes of the area's scenic character. The conifer forest canopy was also a major scenery attribute but this has been changed by the Little Deer fire.

The Little Deer fire burned along a five-mile stretch of Highway 97 with high severity effects, especially in ponderosa pine, creating standing dead trees, blackened tree boles and brush skeletons, bare soil, and dying trees with brown needles. The burned area is visible for this five-mile stretch and views into the burned area may reach 500-600 feet from Highway 97 and visible about one mile along Forest road 70 which forms a portion of the northern boundary of the project area. The intersection of the Tennant road and Highway 97 provides limited views into the burn area looking through some green trees which survived the wildfire. Four distant viewpoints outside the project area provide partial views of the project area, including Grass Lake Rest Area, Goosenest Mountain, and Orr Mountain and Herd Peak Lookouts.

Scenic Integrity

In the project area, current scenic integrity as viewed from inventoried sensitive viewpoints is as follows: overall the project area has some limited evidence of existing roads, a fence line, and a well. Across the project area as a whole, the alterations are minor, and generally a near-natural appearance dominates. Therefore the project area has Moderate Scenic Integrity and meets a Partial Retention VQO as defined in the Forest Plan.

Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1

Direct Effects and Indirect Effects

Alternative 1 will result in direct short and long-term adverse effects to scenic character. In the short term, evidence of the fire with standing dead trees, blackened tree boles and brush, bare soil, and dying trees with brown needles will continue to be noticeable. Along Highway 97, most screening vegetation has lost all needles, thereby opening up views into the forest of bare soils and rock piles. In two to three years, some brushes and grasses will return to the burn areas providing some green color, texture, and ground cover.

By the end of five years, it is expected that pine trees will have decayed to the point where 60 percent of the trees will fall to the ground. As dead trees fall, the scenic character of areas once-forested will change becoming much more open. High fuel loads will create a landscape susceptible to a high intensity, high severity fire. These conditions will likely change the color and texture and will noticeably change the scenic character from a conifer-dominated vegetation type towards a shrub-dominated ecosystem.

Scenic integrity will experience no change because no management actions will affect Visual Quality Objectives.

Cumulative Effects

In the analysis area for scenic character, the Californa Department of Transportation will remove 90 percent of the trees within approximately 100 feet of Highway 97 on both the west and east sides of the highway. This will change the scenic character along the highway by "opening up" the travel corridor. In the short term, travelers will likely notice the presence of fresh wood chips, ground disturbances, and freshly-cut stumps. In two to three years, these effects will diminish with needle cast, natural regeneration of vegetation, and aging (graying) of the wood chips and stumps.

Several other private land parcels within and adjacent to the project area have been or are proposed for salvage logging. Skid trails on lands recently logged are noticeable from sections of highway 97. On lands proposed for logging, if trees are removed up to and along straight property boundaries, these line contrasts will likely be noticeable from some sensitive viewpoints.

Other ongoing and future foreseeable actions on National Forest lands identified in appendix C of the EA (First Creek, Erickson, and Pomeroy) will generally open up stands by thinning, mowing, and/or under burning. These projects will likely be visible from some sensitive viewpoints but appear near-natural. Adding the effects of alternative 1 to the effects of these ongoing and reasonable foreseeable future actions will not have a substantial effect on scenic character or integrity.

Alternative 2

Direct Effects and Indirect Effects

Scenic Character

The removal of dead and dying trees will create large openings with texture contrasts with adjacent forested areas. Surviving green trees will remain individually as well as in stringers and islands. Individual larger snags and clumps that are retained will provide some texture to the units when viewed from sensitive viewpoints.

The removal of hazard trees throughout treatment units, near landings, and along system roads will have little to no effect to scenic character. The limited number of trees to be removed, and their extended viewing distances from sensitive viewpoints, will keep hazard tree removal from being noticeable. Since no system roads within the project area (except Forest Road 70) are identified sensitivity viewpoints, and no hazard tree removal is anticipated along Forest Road 70, hazard tree removal will not have a measurable effect on scenic character. Any hazard trees removed along Highway 97 (on National Forest lands) will be viewed as part of dead tree removal activities.

Planting of conifers only in areas previously stocked with conifers, combined with rocky sites, sites that are not suitable for planting, and tree survival rates, will provide spatial variability across the project area.

Indirect long-term beneficial effects to scenic character from management treatments will be the acccelerated speed of vegetation recovery in the burned area.

Scenic Integrity

Along Forest Road 70, a unit and landing are on top of a hill screened by existing green trees. It is unlikely travelers will notice any activities, thereby meeting a Retention VQO.

At the Tennant Road intersection with Highway 97, travelers will look directly into the project area. The fire burned in this area with low intensity along Highway 97, thus many green trees survived and will provide a visual screen of the units.

To reduce effects to scenic character in the immediate foreground of highway 97, 27 clumps of snags (dead trees) will be retained. These clumps are located to provide some short-term visual screening and/or to minimize visibility of the ground disturbance and stumps immediately adjacent to the highway. These small untreated clumps of dead trees will also show evidence of the fire until the snags decay and fall. Hazard trees proposed from removal off of Highway 97 were excluded and influenced the location, design, and layout of the retained clumps.

Between these clumps there will be occasional stringers with treatment up to highway 97. A project design feature to lower stumps to 6 inches or less (chapter 2, table 2-1 of the EA), combined with aging (graying) of stumps and green vegetation provided by some natural regeneration and replanting, will reduce or eliminate the visibility of management activities in these areas.

Implementation of a project design feature (chapter 2, table 2-1 of the EA) to eliminate the creation of new landings that are visible from Highway 97 and keep any existing landings from being visible from highway 97 after implementation will minimize negative effects on VQO.

At the Grass Lake Rest Area, travelers can see a small portion of the western boundary of the project area at middle ground distance (1½ miles). A retention clump was identified to ensure that dead tree removal will not create a notched effect by daylighting the ridgeline. Therefore, project activities will meet the assigned Partial Retention VQO from this viewpoint.

Portions of the project area will be visible from Herd Peak and Orr Mountain Lookouts and Goosenest Mountain at background distances (greater than 4 miles). Although there will be a textural contrast from dead tree removal, the irregularly-shaped units will appear near-natural and easily meet a Partial Retention VQO.

Minor localized short-term direct adverse effects to VQOs from management treatments will occur during project implementation with the presence of equipment, stumps, exposed soils, and cut and/or piled vegetation. The greenery provided by regeneration of vegetation during the three years after project completion will reduce visual evidence of activities to acceptable levels. All VQOs will be met project wide on about 3,425 acres.

Cumulative Effects

Adding the effects of alternative 2 to the effects of the ongoing and reasonable foreseeable future actions identified in the cumulative effects of alternative 1 will not have a substantial effect on scenic character or integrity.

Alternative 3

Direct Effects and Indirect Effects

Scenic Character

In addition to the scenery effects described in alternative 2, the retention of 30 percent standing dead trees in dead tree removal stands will add some texture to these units when viewed from some sensitive viewing locations. Only one identified no treatment area (718-93) will be visible from Highway 97; some of the others may be visible from distant viewpoints of Orr Mountain and/or Herd Peak Lookouts and Goosenest Mountain. The negligible increase in texture will have no effect on overall scenic character.

Scenic Integrity

The effects on scenic integrity (VQOs) will be the same as for alternative 2.

Cumulative Effects

All scenery effects are the same as Alternative 2.

Comparison of Effects

Scenery effects are displayed by alternative in table 2-3 in chapter 2 of the Little Deer EA.

Compliance with law, regulation, policy, and the Forest Plan

All alternatives comply with law, regulation, policy related to scenery. Action alternatives will help achieve the desired conditions to perpetuate ecologically established scenery, minimize visible disturbances, and meet VQOs identified in the Forest Plan (see the Forest Plan

consistency checklist, available on the project website). Integration of scenery project design features insures this project is consistent with Forest Plan scenery desired conditions.

Scenery Resource Report

Methodology

Overview of Methodology

This evaluation applies current National Forest Landscape Management methodology in conjunction with existing Forest Plan direction. It relies heavily on previous field studies of similar types of projects, as well as field observations from sensitive viewpoints, and consideration of public preferences for scenic quality. This evaluation relies on the following assumption:

ASSUMPTION 1: Wildfires are a natural ecological process that commonly occur on the Klamath National Forest, and as such their effects to scenery are perceived as natural. Associated fire suppression activities (i.e. fire breaks) could be perceived as management activities.

ASSUMPTION 2: Based on my previous Klamath National Forest scenery evaluation experience of 25 years (33 years total Federal experience), as well as post evaluations of completed similar past projects, this project has an 85-90% probability to successfully meet or exceed Visual Quality Objectives as predicted.

The general process for a scenery evaluation follows:

1) Determine high or moderate sensitivity viewpoints located within or adjacent to the project area from which the project may be visible.

2) Extensive/intensive office review of project descriptions and maps; assessing project activity locations (orientation, slope position, distance from viewer, etc), logging systems, combined with on-the-ground knowledge of topography and vegetation.

3) Seven field reviews were conducted of the project area, focusing on project activities located in Retention and Partial Retention VQOs.

4) Individual project activities were evaluated for their visibility from high or moderate sensitivity routes. Noticeable changes from project activities to existing landforms and vegetation are evaluated in terms of form, line, color, and texture contrasts. Utilizing professional expertise, the overall visual dominance and degree of noticeable contrast to the existing scenic character is then compared against the Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) which define levels of acceptable visual change. A judgement call of "meet", "not meet", or "exceed" the assigned VQO is then made.

5) If needed to meet VQOs, Project Design Features (PDFs) were developed. Five recreation/scenery[1] PDFs were designed in order to mitigate effects of all action alternatives on scenery.

[1] Recreation/scenery project design features are referred to as design features SCEN-1 to SCEN-3 in chapter 2 in table 2-1 of the Little Deer EA.

6) Cumulative effects for scenic quality were evaluated within a larger context than the individual project activities themselves, considering the potentially affected viewsheds as a whole.

Analysis Indicators

Analysis indicators used to determine the effects of alternatives on scenery include:

Scenic Character

The overall visual impression or image that gives a geographical area its identity. Scenic character is a qualitative description of the the combination of vegetative patterns, landforms, water characteristics, and cultural features. The existing scenic character description provides a basis for comparing changes from alternatives and desired scenic character.

Scenic Integrity or Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs)

Defines the levels of acceptable visual change, and are identified in the Forest Plan. The VQOs for the project area are defined below:

- Retention VQO - management activities are not visually evident to the casual Forest visitor.
- Partial Retention VQO – management activities may be noticeable, but are subordinate to the characteristic landscape.
- Modification VQO - management activities appear altered and may dominate, but reflect natural features.
- Maximum Modification VQO - management activities appear strongly altered and dominate but appear as natural occurrences when viewed at distances greater than 5 miles.

Spatial and Temporal Context

The spatial scale for analysis of effects to scenery include the viewsheds from the LRMP-identified sensitive viewing locations. The temporal scale is defined as three years for short-term effects, at which time projects are required to meet their assigned VQOs (except Maximum Modification which is immediate). Long-term effects are defined as ten years or longer. These timeframes are required by Forest Plan Standards & Guidelines.

Affected Environment

Scenic Quality of or within National Forests is valued for the aesthetic enjoyment and physiological benefits it offers. “Viewing Natural Features” and “Viewing Wildlife” are the second and third respectively, most popular recreation activities of visitors to the Klamath National Forest (USDA 2012). Scenic quality within the project area is important to the people who live and work in the area and to Forest visitors. Both of these groups travel through the area, enjoying views from State Highway 97 (Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway), Forest road 70, and the Tennant road, and while recreating on National Forest lands, trails, or roads. The scenery of the area contributes a small but important part to the Klamath National Forest’s scenic resources.

Other recreational use in the project area consists of dispersed-type recreation, including hiking, camping, hunting, and woodcutting. Scenery is an important component that affects recreation use, setting, and the recreation experience.

Management Direction:

Forest Plan:

- Forest-wide Standard & Guideline 11-1: The VQOs are minimum conditions to be achieved as soon as possible in all management areas and within 3 years for all VQOs (as viewed from inventoried sensitive viewpoints).
- Forest-wide Visual Resource Standard & Guideline 11-3: Maintain the VQOs as designated. Where possible, and where compatible with other resource objectives, strive for higher visual quality standards.
- Forest-wide Standard & Guideline 11-4: Perpetuate the ecologically established landscape (scenic) character when implementing management activities. Manage activities in accordance with VQOs to reflect the form, line, color, and texture of natural occurrences.

Viewsheds of the Project Area

The table below represents a list of all the *potential* viewpoints located in/or near the project area that project activities could be visible from. The scenery assessment of project activities utilized these viewpoints.

Table 1: Identified potential viewsheds, Sensitivity Level, and Distance Zone

Potential Viewpoint(s)	Visual Sensitivity Level	Distance Zone
State Highway 97 (Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway)	High	Foreground
Grass Lake Rest Area	High	Middle ground
Herd Peak Lookout*	High	Background
Forest Road 70	Moderate	Foreground
County Road #6P01 (Tennant Road)	Moderate	Foreground
Goosenest Mountain*	Moderate	Background
Orr Mountain Lookout*	Moderate	Background

Visual Sensitivity Level: **High** = high level of interest in scenery; **Moderate** = secondary County or Forest road, recreation site or area, moderate use

***** = Viewpoints identified as a sensitive viewpoint post-LRMP and as such were not utilized in the development of LRMP VQOs. Post-LRMP viewpoints are not required to meet S & G 11-1, but should be considered during project planning.

SOURCE: USDA, Forest Service, Klamath National Forest. 2009. Scenery Sensitivity Levels Map, Klamath National Forest – Eastside. (on file at the Klamath National Forest Headquarters, Yreka, CA).

The project area scenery is viewed at distances ranging from less than 100 feet where scenery is dominated by details of individual trees, rock piles, forest canopy and understory, to background views several miles away where vegetation merely appears as largely continuous colors, textures

and patterns upon gently sloping volcanic mountain landforms. Sensitive viewpoints taken from the inventoried sensitivity level map (USDA Forest Service 2009) occur on the project area's southeastern boundary along Highway 97, where the burn area is visible for a five mile stretch along this high use roadway and views into the burned area may reach 500-600 feet from the roadway. The burn area is visible for approximately one mile along Forest road 70, which forms a portion of the northern boundary. The intersection of the Tennant road and Highway 97 provide limited views into the burn area looking thru green trees which survived the wildfire. Four distant viewpoints outside the project area provide partial views of the project area, including Grass Lake Rest Area, Goosenest Mountain, and Orr Mountain and Herd Peak Lookouts.

Existing Scenic Character

Scenic Character is the overall visual impression or image that gives a geographical area its identity. Scenic character is a qualitative description of the the combination of vegetative patterns, landforms, water characteristics, and cultural features. The overall scenic character of the project area and beyond consists of volcanic peaks protruding from broad, gently sloping landforms, overlain with largely continuous, mixed conifer, shasta red fir, white fir and lodgepole pine forest canopies. Attractive openings include small meadows, sagebrush flats, and distinctive irregular lava flow patches on or near the volcanic peaks. The volcanic landforms, lava flow patterns, and consistently high atmospheric clarity are all major attributes of the area's scenic character. The conifer forest canopy also is a major scenery attribute, which has been adversely impacted recently by wildfire and could potentially be further impacted. Other minor scenery attributes include small volcanic rock features,wildlife sightings, and seasonal variations from winter snowfalls and deciduous vegetation.

The scenic character of the project area was significantly affected in 2014 when the Little Deer fire burned 5,503 acres. The project area boundary follows the fire perimeter. The fire burned along a five-mile stretch of Highway 97, mostly with high severity in the ponderosa pine forest type, creating standing dead trees, blackened tree boles and brush skeletons, bare soil, and dying trees with brown needles. The fire opened up views into the forest, exposing hillsides, bare soil, and rock piles. In many places the once green forest now looks like black toothpicks, while ocassionally some green trees survived the fire.

Existing Scenic Integrity

Scenic integrity is the relative degree of natural appearance displayed by a landscape. In the project area, current Scenic Integrity as viewed from inventoried sensitive viewpoints is as follows: Overall the project area has some limited evidence of existing Forest roads (where they intersect with Highway 97), a fenceline running parallel with Highway 97, and a well. Cumulatively, across the project area as a whole, the alterations are minor, and generally a near-natural appearance dominates. Therefore the project area has Moderate Scenic Integrity and meets a Partial Retention VQO as defined in the Forest Plan.

Desired Scenic Character

The ideal, socially valued Scenic Character of the Little Deer project area would display a more attractive, forested condition. These conditions would include increased vegetative and spatial variety throughout a largely continuous but more open and irregular forest canopy, with more frequent small, irregular openings and edges, a widepread presence of large trees as individuals

and clumps, volcanic accent features such as outcrops, rocks and barrens, irregular patches of native shrubs, forbs and grasses in openings and forest floor understories, scattered standing snags, scattered irregular fire-killed canopy openings containing clumps of standing dead trees over a green surface of conifer seedlings. This more open forest canopy would support attractive views through the forest canopy as well as to more distant volcanic landscapes.

Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1

Direct Effects and Indirect Effects

The No Action alternative would result in direct short and long-term adverse effects to scenic character. In the short term, evidence of the fire with standing dead trees, blackened tree boles and brush, bare soil, and dying trees with brown needles will continue to be noticeable. Along Highway 97, most screening vegetation have lost all needles, therefore opening up views into the forest of bare soils and rock piles (tumlis). In two to three years, some brushes and grasses would return to the burn areas providing some green color, texture, and ground cover.

In the long term (in approximately five years), pine trees would have decayed to the point where it is estimated 60% of the trees would fall to the ground. (based on observations of Mt Hebron fire effects). As dead trees fall, the scenic character of areas once-forested will change becoming much more open. This color and texture change will be readily noticeable from sensitive viewpoints. Extremely high fuel loads would develop creating a landscape that is susceptible to a high intensity, high severity fire. These conditions would likely create a permanent vegetation change away from a conifer-dominated vegetation type towards a shrub-dominated ecosystem.

Without both harvest and replanting treatments within the project area, current conditions will likely result in increased growth of brush. The competing brush, combined with a limited seed source would inhibit the natural regeneration of conifer species that dominated the landscape prior to the Little Deer Fire. The desired scenic character of a forested canopy with large tree character, as well as increased species diversity will be adversely affected. Without management treatments, achievement of the desired condition for scenery and meeting the Purposed and Need will be set back 50 plus years or more.

Visual Quality Objectives establish acceptable levels of alteration for management activities. Because this is a No Action alternative, there would be no effects to the Visual Quality Objectives.

Cumulative Effects

In the project area, Californa Department of Transportation will remove 90 percent of the trees (live and dead) within approximately 100 feet of Highway 97 on both the west and east sides of the highway. This will change the scenic character along the highway by “opening up” the travel corridor. In the short term, because of its close proximity to the highway, travelers will likely notice the presence of fresh wood chips, ground disturbances, and freshly-cut stumps. In two to three years these effects will diminish with needle cast, natural regeneration of vegetation, and aging (graying) of the wood chips and stumps.

Several other private land parcels within or adjacent to the project area have been or are proposed for salvage logging. Skid trails on lands recently logged are highly noticeable. On lands proposed for logging, if trees are removed up to and along straight property boundaries, these line contrasts will likely be noticeable from some sensitive viewpoints.

Other ongoing and future foreseeable actions on National Forest lands (First Creek, Erickson, and Pomory) would generally open up stands by thinning, mowing, and/or under burning. These projects will likely be visible from some sensitive viewpoints but appear near-natural.

Alternative 2

Direct Effects and Indirect Effects

Below is a generalized description of the various project activities and associated effects to scenic character. A discussion of effects to VQOs then follows:

Dead Tree Removal

The removal of dead and dying trees will create large openings with texture contrasts with adjacent forested areas. Green trees that survived, will remain individually as well as in stringers and islands. Individual larger snags and clumps with no treatment will be retained for wildlife and scenery resources. These will provide some texture to the units when viewed from sensitive viewpoints.

Hazard Tree Removal

The removal of hazard trees throughout treatment units, near landings,– and along system roads would have little to no effect to scenery. The limited number of trees to be removed, combined with extended viewing distances from sensitive viewpoints will not be noticeable. Also all system roads within the project area (except Forest Road 70) are not identified sensitivity viewpoints. No hazard tree removal is anticipated along Forest Road 70. Any hazard trees removed along Highway 97 (on National Forest lands) will be viewed as part of dead tree removal activities.

Reforestation

Planting only in areas previously stocked with conifers, combined with rocky and unplantable sites, and tree survival rates, will provide spatial variability across the project area. Tree species used for planting will roughly correspond with historical stand composition, varying by forest type.

Machine and Hand Felling, Hand Piling and Burning

The short-term visual impacts from felling and piling dead trees and then burning will create color and texture soil contrasts. A recovery time of three years will allow revegetation or "greening up" of these effects. Fuels reduction will help reduce the possibility of a high intensity wildfire and increase the area's resiliency wildfire.

Roads

Temporary roads will utilize existing roadbeds. Upon completion of the project these roads will be closed and blocked off with natural barriers. Shrubs and grasses will be replanted.

Indirect long-term beneficial effect to scenic character from management treatments would be speeding up recovery of the burn area. The above activities would be extremely consistent with the Desired Scenic Character and meet the Purpose and Need for the project: "Restore scenery conditions within the project area to a conifer-dominant scenic character that is more consistent with historic scenery conditions, while minimizing short-term scenery disturbances to retain a largely natural appearance."

Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs): Along Forest Road 70 a unit and landing will be located on top of the hill screened by existing green trees. It is unlikely travelers would notice any activities, thereby meeting a Retention VQO.

At the Tennant Road intersection with Highway 97 travelers will look directly into the project area. The fire burned in this area with low intensity along Highway 97, thus many (green) trees survived and will provide a visual screen of the units. Project activities will easily meet the assigned VQO of Retention.

To reduce scenery effects in the immediate foreground of highway 97, twenty-seven retention (dead tree) clumps, totaling 27 acres were identified for no dead tree removal. These clumps were located to provide some very limited short-term visual screening and/or minimize visibility of ground disturbance and stumps immediately adjacent to the highway. These small untreated clumps with dead trees will also show evidence of the fire until the snags decay and fall. Hazard trees to Highway 97 were excluded in the location, design, and layout of the clumps; these trees were included in the dead tree removal units.

Between these clumps there will be occasional stringers with treatment to Highway 97. A recreation/scenery project design feature for low stumps (6" or less), combined with aging (graying) of stumps, and "greening up" through limited natural regeneration and replanting will eliminate visibility of management activities in these areas.

A recreation/scenery project design feature was developed so no new landings will be created within visibility from Highway 97 and any existing landings will not be visible after implementation from Highway 97.

At the Grass Lake Rest Area, travelers can see a small portion of the western boundary of the project area at middleground distance (1½ miles). A retention clump was identified to ensure that dead tree removal will not create a notched effect by daylighting the ridgeline. Therefore project activities will easily meet the assigned Partial Retention VQO from this viewpoint.

Portions of the project area will be visible from Herd Peak and Orr Mountain Lookouts and Goosenest Mountain at background distances (greater than 4 miles). Assigned VQOs for units include Partial Retention, Modification, and Maximum Modification. Although there will be a textural contrast from dead tree removal, the irregularly-shaped units will appear near-natural and easily meet a Partial Retention VQO. Thus all assigned VQOs will be met from these viewpoints.

Minor localized short-term direct adverse effects to VQOs from management treatments would occur during project implementation with the presence of equipment, smoke, stumps, exposed soils, and cut and/or piled vegetation. "Greening up" for three years after project completion would reduce visual evidence of activities to acceptable levels. All VQOs would be met project wide on approximately 3,425 acres.

Cumulative Effects

In addition to the scenery effects described in Alternative 1, the cumulative effects will also include:

Individually all project activities would meet or exceed their assigned VQOs. However cumulative scenic quality effects are evaluated in a larger context than the individual project activities themselves - the potentially affected viewsheds as a whole. The scenery analysis area includes the multitude of viewsheds throughout the project area. When viewed from multiple viewpoints, proposed management activities in all viewsheds would be appear visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. All viewsheds would be natural or near-natural appearing and meet or exceed a Partial RetentionVQO.

Alternative 3

Direct Effects and Indirect Effects

In addition to the scenery effects described in Alternative 2, direct and indirect effects of Alternative 3 include:

The retention of 30 percent standing dead trees in dead tree removal stands would add some texture to these units when viewed from some sensitive viewing locations. Only one identified no treatment area (718-93) will be visible from Highway 97; some of the others may be visible from distant viewpoints of Orr Mountain and/or Herd Peak Lookouts and Goosenest Mountain. The negligible increase in texture will have no effect on overall scenic character.

Cumulative Effects

All scenery effects are the same as Alternative 2.

Comparison of Effects

Scenery effects are displayed by alternative in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Comparison of Effects of Alternatives on Scenery

	Alternative 1 (No Action)	**Alternative 2 (Proposed Action as Modified)**	**Alternative 3**
Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs)	No effect to VQOs	Minor localized short-term direct adverse effects to VQOs from management treatments– during project implementation with the presence of equipment, smoke, stumps, exposed soils, and cut and/or piled vegetation. "Greening up" for three years after project completion would reduce visual evidence of activities to acceptable levels. All VQOs would be met project-wide on approximately 3,425 acres.	Minor localized short-term direct adverse effects to VQOs from management treatments– during project implementation with the presence of equipment, smoke, stumps, exposed soils, and cut and/or piled vegetation. "Greening up" for three years after project completion would reduce visual evidence of activities to acceptable levels. All VQOs would be met project-wide on approximately 1,598 acres.

	Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternative 2 (Proposed Action as Modified)	Alternative 3
Scenic Character	Long term adverse effect with permanent vegetation change away from a conifer-dominated vegetation type towards a shrub-dominated ecosystem. Achievement of the desired condition would be set back 50 plus years or more.	Indirect long-term beneficial effect to scenic character from management treatments would be speeding up recovery– of the burn area to a conifer-dominated character that is more consistent with historic scenery conditions and Desired Scenic Character.	Indirect long-term beneficial effect to scenic character from management treatments would be speeding up recovery– of the burn area to a conifer-dominated character that is more consistent with historic scenery conditions and Desired Scenic Character.

Compliance with law, regulation, policy, and the Forest Plan

This project would help achieve the Klamath National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan of 1995) desired conditions to perpetuate ecologically established scenery, minimize visible disturbances, and meet Forest Visual Quality Objectives(VQOs). Integration of recreation/scenery project design features insures this project is consistent with Forest Plan scenery desired conditions.

Literature Cited

USDA, Forest Service. 1995. Land and resource management plan: Klamath National Forest. Yreka, CA.

USDA, Forest Service Natural Resource Manager National Visitor Use Monitoring Program. 2012. Visitor Use Report, Region 5 Klamath National Forest http://apps.fs.usda.gov/nrm/nvum/results/A05005.aspx/Round2USDA, Forest Service. 2009.

USDA, Forest Service, Klamath National Forest. 2009. Scenery Sensitivity Levels Map, Klamath National Forest – Eastside. (on file at the Klamath National Forest Headquarters, Yreka, CA).

Appendix A: Visual Retention Clumps

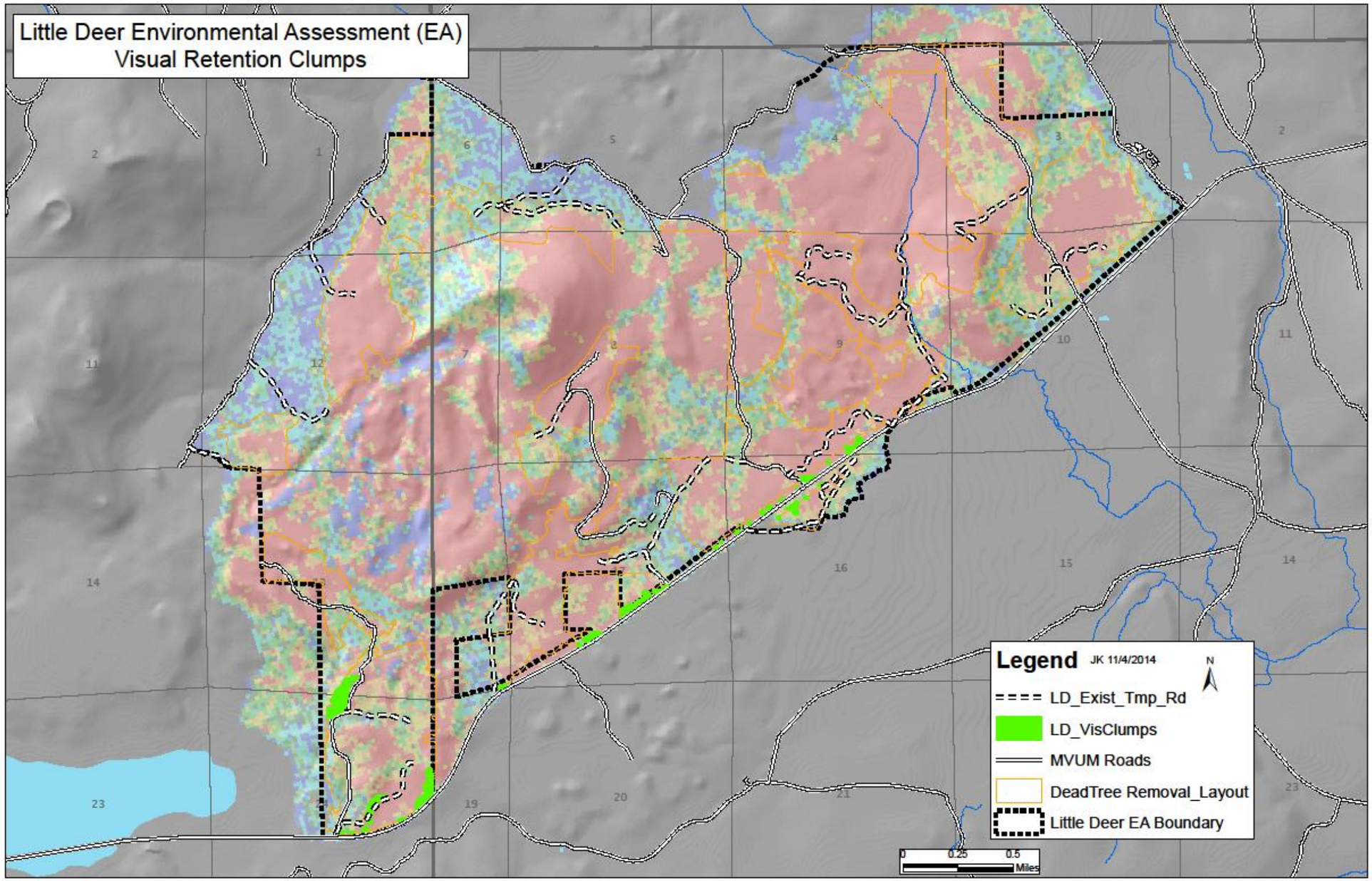

Figure A- 1: Visual retention clumps within project area

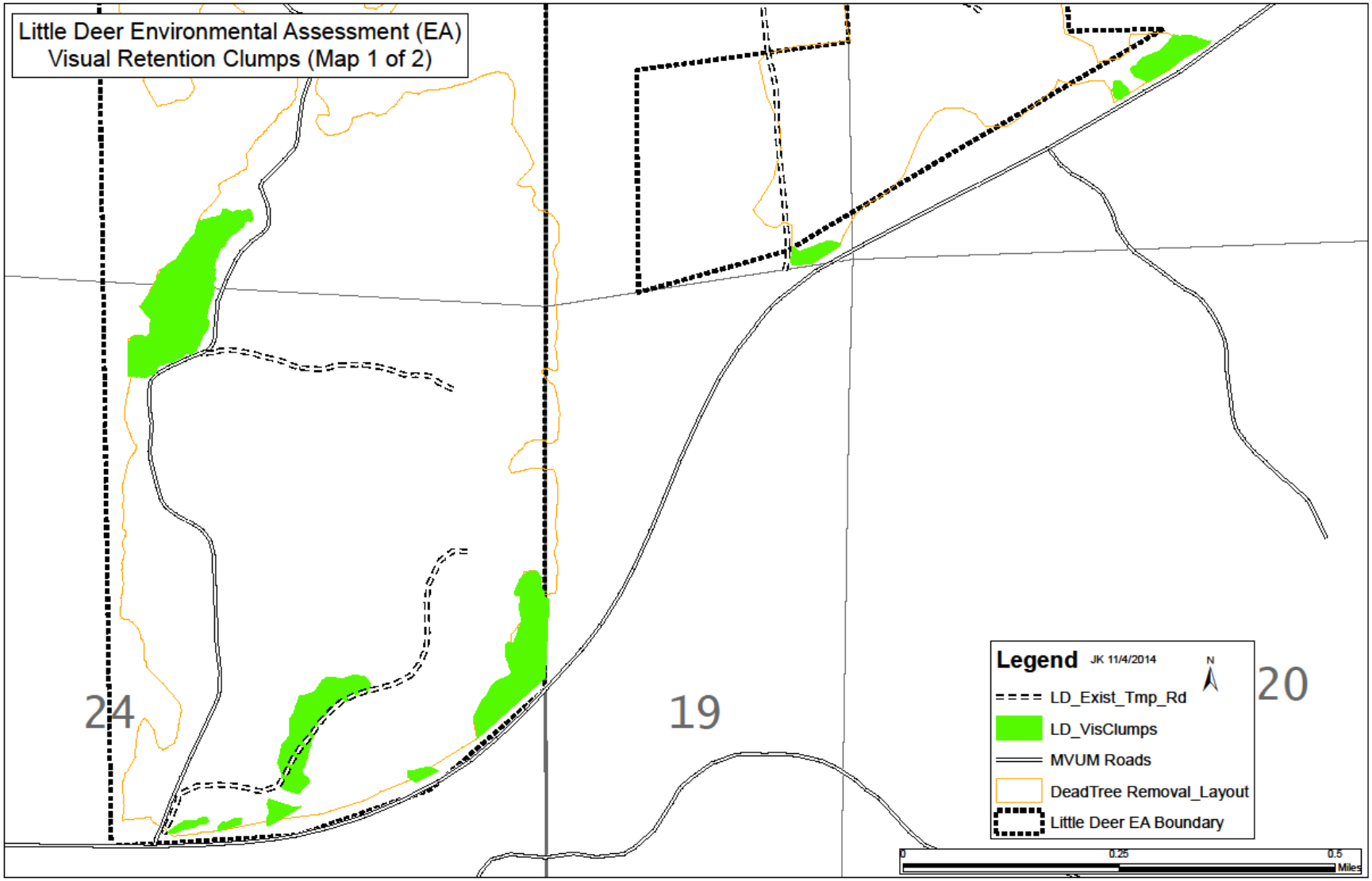

Figure A- 2: Visual retention clumps along Highway 97, on southwestern portion of the project.

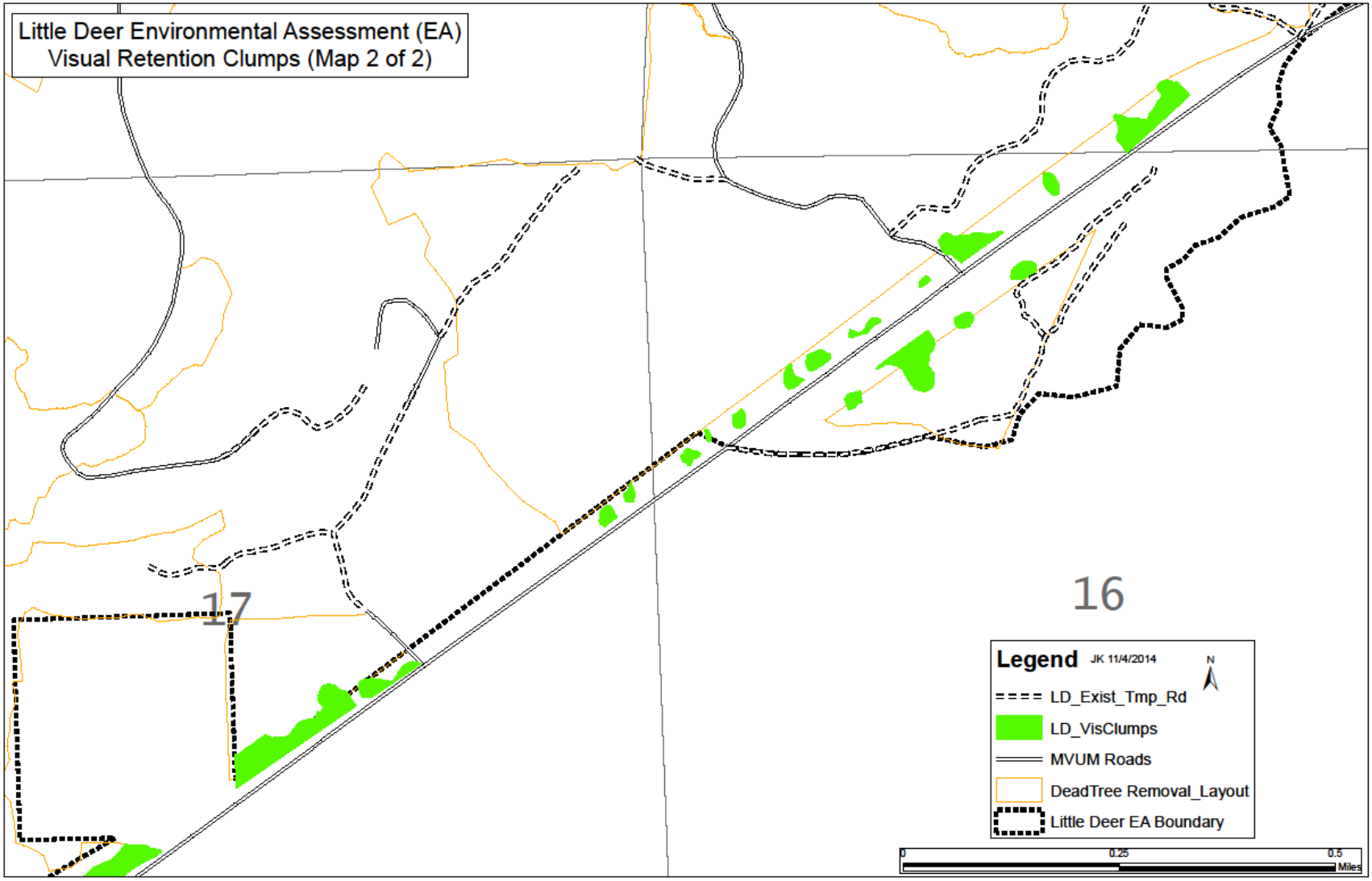

Figure A- 3: Visual retention clumps along Highway 97